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26Jan81

Congressional Briefing

I. Introduction

- 26th Party Congress next month. Review last 5 years; approve basic foreign and domestic policies for next 5.
- Defense: [] Soviets will point to growth in conventional, strategic nuclear forces since 1976.
- Economy: [] will point to great strengths, successes of last 5 years; will examine problems of low growth, energy -- perhaps long term aspects.
- More difficult -- will assess changes in international environment since 1976 -- changes in strategic outlook.

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II. Soviet View of Changes in International Environment Since Last Congress

A. In '76, saw

- US military retrenchment compared to vigorous, broad Soviet programs
- US withdrawal from international involvements, especially in Third World.
- Possibility of improved relations with China after Mao.

B. Since '76 important developments favorable to Soviet interests

- Fall of Shah. Loss of major US ally, bastion securing Persian Gulf. Critical change. Opportunity for USSR-long range; short-range problems.
- Spread of political ferment, anti-US policies in Caribbean and Central America.
- In Western Europe, division w. US on how to respond to Soviet activities abroad. Separate detente a plausible alternative.
- Have secured pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan at relatively modest cost. Certainly not without difficulty, but important advance into SW Asia. In for long term.

C. Same time, # of developments unfavorable to USSR

- collapse of US-Soviet detente, including unfavorable prospects for SALT.

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- increased efforts among US, WE, China, Japan and some leading Third World countries (Egypt, Pakistan) to coordinate policies relating to USSR.
- reemergence in US of support for more vigorous defense, more assertive role in foreign policy.
- US normalization with China and quick development of security cooperation. Not accompanied by any improvement in Sino-Sov relations after Mao.
- Sino-Vietnamese war - demonstration of Chinese willingness to attack Sov ally even at risk of Sov retaliation. Sov loss of face.
- Iran-Iraq war, Sovs unable to turn to advantage with either side thus far.
- Poland - unacceptable situation - rival power center to party. Economic disaster. Very real possibility of use of military force.

D. Three areas of current preoccupation

- Poland
 - In late Nov, Sovs began to prepare forces for use in Poland.
 - Dec 5, Kania got more time, less flexibility. Sovs held off - assurances, direct costs, foreign reaction.
 - Poles sobered for while by mil. preps.
 - Sov concerns remain: internal disorder in Party; challenge to Party by Union; no solace in trends.
 - Wait and see if Kania can restore. Harder line - renewed unrest. Prospects not encouraging that coercive measures can be avoided at some point.
- Iran and Iran-Iraq War
 - Sovs benefit-Iranian action - US out. Main obj. - keep US out. Harder now hostages out.
 - Little headway with regime. Behind scenes, assume helping Tudeh Party and leftists in hope pick up pieces; helping hardliners - keep US out.
 - Hoped could use war to get favor with both. Little success. Relations with Iraq strained.

- Know have mil. contingency plan for invasion of Iran.
 - ° Poss. use if Iran self-destructs, esp. if West go into South to secure oil.
 - ° Short of that, do not expect use: Afghan, W. reaction, Muslims; polit. options.

-- The US

- Future of bilateral relationship - not just trade, grain, technology, but poss. of re-est. of working rel. or return to cold war.
- Concerned by poss. of resurgent US, more assertive role, prospect of US effort to recapture strat. arms lead of a decade or so ago.
- Key-future of SALT. Central to Sov view of bilateral relations. Such on-going negotiations not only provide Sovs pot. to limit US programs and influence US strat. decisions, but as in 70s, create pressures in US which constrain its responses to Sov adventurism in 3rd World.
- For better or worse, US central to Sov foreign and defense policy. Sovs not just reactive to US; have own objectives, policies: but in both cases, US actions, responses central.

-- Of course, mention Afghanistan - but not current preoccup.

- Despite errors in est. of mil., pol. situation year ago - now clearly in for long term. No sign of w/d, negot or, on other hand, major escalation.

III. What Next for Soviets: Look to 80s.

A. Their perspective

- In 70s - change in self-image as global player, superpower due prim. to growth in mil. power, which in turn made possible much greater Sov ability and willingness to project power abroad.
- Have seen more assertive, aggressive Sov foreign policy since US w/d from VN, beginning with Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola.
- Sovs see 80s as period of continued global turbulence, instability, in some respects even more so than the 1970s.

- B. As Soviets look to 80s, see continuation of two longstanding, fundamental challenges: how to prevent or control change in their own sphere of influence and in areas where instability might adversely affect them; and, on the other hand, how to promote change in the 3rd World and in areas where instability might advance Soviet interests.

Achievement of these two objectives could involve very different policies.

- Preventing instability at home and adverse changes in the strategic nuclear relationship, for example, might point the Soviets toward improving rel. with US - obtain grain, trade, technology; long range arms control to stop US programs, preserve Sov advant. Expand rel. with WE, stop LRTNF, weaken NATO.
- Promoting instability helpful to Soviet interests abroad might point the Soviets toward, for example, even more aggressive policy in many areas and exploitation of their presently perceived mil. adv. - window of opportunity - to attain dramatic gains. Could include more aggressive approach in 3rd world - more assertive in Iran, C. America, Africa; greater spt of terrorism, outlaws like Libya; more disruptive role in ME; cont. and accel. all arms programs. Intensify efforts to disrupt US-WE ties.
- Experience of 70s suggests to Sovs they can work toward achievement at same time of both obj. - prev. change/conflict where could hurt them, prom it where might be to adv. Success at doing both, however, depends to important extent on the response, actions of US.

- C. What, then, are specific policy implications for next few years of Sov pursuit of these objectives?

1. First and foremost, continue opportunism, exploitation and creation of instability, political conflict in Third World.

- continue to use Cubans, Vietnamese
- espec. targets in SW Asia, Africa, Central America, ME
- as in past not restrain out of deference to US sensitivities or to promote better relations

2. Continue efforts to weaken and split NATO (3% spending LRTNF, joint measures against USSR), and US-WE generally. Safeguard important Soviet economic dealings (access to technology, gas pipeline).

3. Containment of China, esp. thru support to VN; polit. initiatives with India, ASEAN. If China 2nd lesson VN w. less lim. obj. than 79, greater prospect of Sov retal. measures.

GRAPHIC #1
Target areas

4. Try to prevent settlement of Arab-Israeli dispute: no war - no peace. Try to split moderate and radical arabs.
 5. Promote power and influence of VN, Cuba. Cont. to subsidize.
 6. Sensitive to avoid impression cowed by new Administration. Assertive in defending est. clients -- VN, Cuba, Ethiopia, Yemen, etc. Will offset strengthening of regional US military capabilities, as in P.G.
 7. Will compete with any acceleration of US strat. programs in 80s, regardless of cost or state of econ.
 - seek to preserve and extend existing mil. advantages; continue to erode remaining US advantages.
 - will continue presently planned weapons programs. Indeed, more than 25 major weapon systems enter serial production in next 5-10 years, poss. more. Preps. underway for even more programs in mid-late 80s. Defense spending increase through 85.
 8. But, do not see Sovs launching major mil. Offensives against WE or US in foreseeable future.
 9. Indeed, out of self interest, Moscow will try to revive better relationship with the US -- for trade, technology, grain, constrain US arms programs.
 - will wait at least a few months for signals from new Administration on grain embargo, trade, SALT.
 - believe, however, Sovs pessimistic about any significant improvement in relations with US.
- D. Outlook -- intensified, aggressive Soviet competition in arms and foreign affairs.
- In specific situations, however Sovs - today as always - carefully and cautiously assess risk of direct confrontation with US. Probably assess risk differently now than 10 yrs ago. On balance, though, prefer to avoid direct confrontation, especially if military clash possible.
 - Sovs also do not relish prospect of open-ended arms race.
 - Thus, in 80s, as in past, Sov restraint in arms or in foreign adventures will depend primarily on costs and risks. They have judged both low in recent years. Positive incentives alone -- trade, grain, technology -- insufficient to bring about restraint.

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IV. Soviet Internal Political Scene: Succession

A. Continuity

- Above described assertiveness will continue through much of decade.
- Broad consensus under Brezhnev.
- Heirs maintain course over next several years. Brezhnev colleagues and proteges in control.

B. Current Situation

- Brezhnev power at peak.
- No apparent rivals in Politburo. Opponents removed or died in last 7 years.
- Kosygin's departure improved position.

GRAPHIC #2
Opponents out

C. Succession on Back Burner

- No apparent plans to step down. Has avoided formal designation of heir. Younger claimants for position on periphery.

D. Long Term Succession Prospects

- Brezhnev's health fragile
- Two stage succession. No one inherit all Brezhnev's power - collective leadership. Initially new party leader likely to be a Brezhnev associate.
- Longer term prospects for change. Old guard departs over next 5 years; key posts in new, younger hands. New men less stake in present policy course, leaders face more difficult problems, particularly economic -- partially attributable to current leadership inaction.
- But power consolidation necessary for new policies. Makes hard. Consensus for change usually lacking in collective leadership. Advocates of change run political risks without power to back up. Real burden on those seeking change.

GRAPHIC #3
Two-stage
succession